



Be a Peacemaker.  
Transform Your Relationships.™



# Bringing Relational Wisdom Into Your Church Network

Relational Wisdom® 360

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# BRINGING RELATIONAL WISDOM® INTO YOUR CHURCH NETWORK

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**Terminology:** “Church network” refers to all types of church organizations, including denominations, districts and conventions, and regional presbyteries, associations and conferences. “Leaders” refers to all types of church leaders, including elders, deacons and ministry leaders, as well as church boards, trustees, councils, sessions and vestries.

## WHAT EVERY FAITHFUL CHURCH LEADER WANTS

You want to lead a unified church network that honors God, builds healthy relationships and handles conflict in a way that is biblical, gracious and restorative.

The problem is that many Christians struggle with conflict and often handle it in ways that damage relationships and weaken the church’s mission to proclaim and model the transforming power of Jesus and his gospel.

RW360 understands how exhausting and painful church conflict can be. We don’t want you to carry these burdens alone. We want to come alongside you to learn about the unique vision, strengths and needs of your network and work with you to develop a custom plan to strengthen the relational culture and peacemaking skills of your congregations.

Think of RW360 as a “bridesmaid to the bride.” We are here to support your efforts to make your churches as spiritually and relationally beautiful as possible as we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## FOUR STEPS FOR BUILDING HIGHLY RELATIONAL CHURCHES

Imagine churches where leaders work in unity, conflicts are resolved quickly, families flourish and their witness shines brightly. This could be your church network. You can lead the way to building these kinds of highly relational churches by taking four steps.

1. **Read this booklet and share it with your leadership team** to develop a united understanding of ways you can use RW360’s resources to strengthen the relational skills of your network and present an appealing witness for Christ throughout your region.
2. [Schedule a Free Zoom Consultation](#) to answer your leaders’ questions and to begin developing a **custom plan** for strengthening the relational culture of your network.
3. **Provide the leaders of your churches with professional development training** in relational wisdom and peacemaking that enables them to set an inspiring example for their congregations.
4. **Encourage churches to use Sunday school classes and small group studies** that enable members to build relational skills that strengthen their marriages and parenting, improve their ability to share the gospel and enhance job performance and career advancement.

Schedule a free consultation today. God could us this simple step to transform the culture, the witness and the growth of your churches in amazing ways in the years ahead.

## ONE CHALLENGE ALL CHURCHES FACE

Jesus' design for the church is that it would be a community of redeemed and transformed people who reflect God's glory by loving one another as he has loved us (John 13:34-35). This love is to be reflected in relationships that are characterized by unity, kindness, forgiveness and unshakeable bonds (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 1 Pet. 3:8).

As we see in Scripture and in our own lives, however, family, church and ministry relationships are frequently strained or broken (Acts 15:39; 1 Cor. 1:11; Gal. 5:15).

The number one cause of lost friendships, divorces, pastoral or missionary burnout or forced exits, staff turnover and church or ministry division is *not* theological differences, financial mismanagement, poor leadership or even moral failure.

The number one cause, by far, of all these events is *unresolved personal conflict*.<sup>1</sup>

The *financial cost of conflict* in the church is enormous. For example, when one family leaves a church over conflict, the church loses, on average, \$2,224 of *annual* giving. Worse yet, the average cost of a forced pastoral exit is \$83,000 and can be much more.<sup>2</sup>

The *spiritual costs of conflict* are far greater, however. A forced pastoral exit can silence a pastor's preaching forever, stain a church's witness and cripple evangelism. Lacking the help of a trusted shepherd, conflicted couples are more likely to divorce, which exposes their children to mental health issues, drug use, sexual promiscuity and a greater likelihood of leaving the faith. The ripple effects of conflict go on and on.

## YOU ARE A KEY PART OF GOD'S SOLUTION

As a Christian leader, you can be used by God to counter the division and destruction of conflict by serving him and the people in your churches as a peacemaker, a conciliator and a model of relational wisdom (Matt. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:17-19).

The key to fulfilling this role is to be an example and channel of the redeeming, transforming and reconciling power of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 1:19).

As God's grace transforms and flows through you, you can develop skills that enable you to teach, model and practice relational wisdom and peacemaking in ways that instruct others and inspire them to follow your example. As 1 Timothy 4:15 teaches, "*Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*"

You can begin by discipling your leadership team and then together you can strengthen the relational skills of churches throughout your network (2 Tim. 4:2).

[Request Consultation](#)

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<sup>1</sup> See [Eight Church Nightmares](#) and the studies summarized in [Strike the Shepherd](#).

<sup>2</sup> Costs may include reduced giving by members leaving the church, resignations of other staff, severance packages, pulpit supply, job search, relocation costs and in some cases, legal fees (*Id.*)

## THE FRUIT OF RELATIONALLY WISE LEADERSHIP

As you teach and model the relational skills described in Scripture, the churches in your network can experience many life-and-ministry-changing benefits.

- Your people can experience greater unity, productivity and enduring relationships.
- You can enjoy the clear conscience that comes from faithful shepherding (Matt. 25:21).
- You can strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of divorce.
- You can avoid burning out and have more time with your spouse and children.
- You and your church can avoid the devastating trauma of a forced leadership exit.
- You can “close the backdoor” by reducing member and staff turnover.
- Your church can save thousands of dollars as you retain members and staff.
- Your people can improve their job performance and career advancement.<sup>3</sup>
- You and your people can model inspiring peacemaking in your community.<sup>4</sup>
- Best of all, God will be glorified as people in your community witness the transforming power of the gospel and are drawn to Jesus and his church (John 17:20-22; 13:34-35).

## SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION AND DEVELOP A PLAN

Several years ago, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod invested several thousand dollars to train a group of church leaders in the peacemaking and conciliation skills described in [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#) and [Guiding People Through Conflict](#), which are foundational resources for RW360’s training program.

Two years after this training, the LCMS reported that they had *fully recovered the financial cost of the training* through reduced forced pastoral exits, church splits, attorneys’ fees and demands on denomination staff time. More importantly, they reported that they had significantly improved the unity of their churches and the witness of their people.

Your church network can see similar results as you take these kinds of actions.

- **Share this booklet with your leadership team** to develop a united understanding of ways you can use RW360’s resources to strengthen your churches.
- Use [this form](#) to **request a free Zoom consultation meeting** where our staff can help you **develop a custom implementation plan** that fits the unique vision, strengths and needs of your church network.
- Request **conflict coaching or conciliation services** to help local churches resolve current conflicts (see [Christian Conciliation Service](#)).
- Host a [3-hour Relationally Wise Leader Seminar](#) to introduce the church leaders in your network to RW360’s resources and training. Every attendee will go home with a

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<sup>3</sup> See [Relational Wisdom Strengthens Both Families and Businesses](#)

<sup>4</sup> See [Real-Life Examples](#)

[detailed, practical strategy](#) for bringing these practical, ministry-enhancing resources into his church.<sup>5</sup>

- Encourage the leaders in your churches to use RW360's pastoral ministry blog posts to strengthen their relational, peacemaking and conciliation skills (see [Appendix C](#) for details).
- Encourage your **leaders to strengthen their relational, peacemaking and conciliation skills** by going through our [RW Shepherd Training Program](#). Some leaders may decide to go on for [Advanced Training and Certification](#) as instructors, coaches or conciliators.
- Invite RW360 to provide a **plenary session or workshop at your annual conference** to introduce your church leaders to these concepts and tools.
- Encourage your churches to use RW360's witnessing and evangelism resources to equip their people to [share the gospel with friends, relatives and coworkers](#) (see [Appendix D](#) for details).
- Encourage your churches to use RW360's model [Relational Commitments](#) to clarify their pastoral care practices and reduce their churches' exposure to threats of legal liability (see [Appendix E](#) for details).
- Encourage your churches to establish [in-house Peace Sower Teams](#) that can reduce their pastors' workload by providing ongoing training, coaching and conciliation services for their congregations (see [Appendix F](#) for details).

Your church network does not need to commit to all these action steps up front. RW360 recommends that you start with two or three exploratory steps to see how our material aligns with your network's mission and priorities. If your leaders and congregations respond positively, you can move on to other action steps.

To help you get started on this process, RW360 would welcome the opportunity to meet with your leadership team via Zoom to develop an initial customized plan for your churches.

As stated at the beginning of this document, RW360 views itself as a bridesmaid to the Bride of Christ. Therefore, it would be our privilege to be used by God to work with you to make your churches more spiritually and relationally beautiful as you seek to reflect the glory of God and await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Request Consultation](#)

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<sup>5</sup> This 3-hour seminar introduces our two foundational courses, *Discovering Relational Wisdom* and *Relational Peacemaking* and provides practical illustrations of how these concepts can be applied by ministry leaders. Attendees are given scholarships to our two foundational courses so they can dig into these principles more deeply on their own. This seminar may be presented live or as a webinar.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A - CONFIRM RW360'S COMPATIBILITY WITH YOUR NETWORK

To make sure that RW360's theology and resources are compatible with your church network's theology, ecclesiology, vision and mission, we encourage you to review this background information.

- Our [website homepage](#), which provides an overview of our entire ministry.
- Our [About page](#), which includes links to our history, statement of faith, vision and mission, staff and training clients.
- [Training Endorsements](#), which show the breadth of our theological and professional acceptance.
- [Relational Peacemaking™](#), our practical theology on conflict resolution, which is based on [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#).
- [Relational Wisdom®](#), which is our God-centered, biblically grounded, gospel-driven paradigm for emotional intelligence.

### APPENDIX B - EXPLORE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BIBLICAL PEACEMAKING

To see how effective RW360's peacemaking resources and services can be, visit [Christian Conciliation Service](#) and read the real-life examples you'll find through these links:

- [Personal Peacemaking Cases](#)
- [Informal Conciliation Cases](#)
- [Professional Conciliation Cases](#)

Our 70-page ebooklet, [Guiding People Through Conflict](#), provides a summary of the peacemaking principles your church leaders can use to lead similar conciliation efforts.

### APPENDIX C - MODEL RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

RW360 has mediated hundreds of church conflicts. Most of these cases were triggered or escalated by church leaders who were unskilled in peacemaking and made a series of *well-intended but clumsy relational decisions*. The following articles describe relational skills that would have *prevented most of these conflicts*. Your leaders can learn these skills by reading one article a day and then discussing the principles during regular leadership meetings. This small investment of time can help your church avoid many major conflicts and save hundreds of hours of pastoral time. More importantly, as your leaders model these skills, you will set an example for your people to follow (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12).

1. Relational leaders [model humility, teachability and flexibility](#) (Phil. 2:3-4).
2. Relational leaders realize that [sin can turn strengths into weaknesses](#) (1 Cor. 8:1).
3. Relational leaders understand [the seductiveness of power and its potential for abuse](#); (see [Power Causes Brain Damage](#) and [Psychology of Power](#); contrast with [Reagan, Lincoln, RW and You](#), [Lincoln's Relational Wisdom](#) and [Nelson Mandela](#)).

4. Relational leaders realize that [there is one relationship that is rarely restored](#).
5. Relational leaders are [skilled peacemakers](#) and [conciliators](#) who [model confession](#) and inspire the "[Golden Result](#)" (Matt. 5:9; James 3:18; Matt. 7:12).
6. Relational leaders are [always bringing the gospel to their people](#) (Rom. 5:1-11).
7. Relational leaders develop and model [empathy and compassion](#) (Col. 3:12).
8. Relational leaders know how to [redeem an offense](#) (Prov. 15:1).
9. Relational leaders use [gentle shepherding](#) and [loving discipline to restore lost sheep](#).
10. Relational leaders are both [approachable](#) and [accountable](#) (Luke 7:37-38; Matt. 8:9).
11. Relational leaders are always [building passport](#) (John 4:7-30).
12. Relational leaders model the spiritual discipline of [drawing attention to EGGs](#) (Ps. 9:1).
13. Relational leaders provide the [Three P's of Satisfaction](#) (1 Cor. 14:40; Matt. 7:120).
14. Relational leaders practice [clarity plus charity](#) (Matt. 7:12).
15. Relational leaders know how to [defuse explosive meetings](#) (Matt. 7:3-5).
16. Relational leaders [encourage and inspire others to be better](#) (1 Thess. 5:11).
17. Relational leaders know that there is [a better way to handle](#) abuse (Prov. 28:13).
18. Relational leaders understand [the power of making a public confession](#) (Prov. 28:13).
19. Relational leaders [seek advice when they are deadlocked](#) (Prov. 12:15; 20:18).
20. Relational leaders [refuse to be crippled by ministry failures and losses](#) (2 Cor. 7:10).

## APPENDIX D - ENHANCE OUTREACH, EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus calls his church to spread the gospel by making disciples throughout the earth and teaching people to obey all that he has commanded us. Many churches excel at discipling their members on Sunday morning, but we are often less effective at training our people to share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers the rest of the week.

These two resources illustrate how can lead the way in equipping your people to share the gospel easily and comfortably: [Using Relational Wisdom for Outreach, Evangelism and Church Growth](#) and [Pastor Resolves Texas Football Scandal](#).



You can use the following RW360 resources to train your entire church to be effective witnesses for Christ:

- [Using Relational Wisdom for Witnessing](#) is a free course that describes easy ways your members can use the principles of relational wisdom and peacemaking to share the gospel with relatives, friends and coworkers.

- You can strengthen your members' relational skills by offering them [Sunday school classes and small group studies on relational wisdom and peacemaking](#), which will enable them to reflect the transforming power of the gospel in their lives (see [Reconciling Two Stubborn Scientists](#); John 13:34-35 and 17:20-23).
- Members who have a gift for witnessing and evangelism can use the ["values-based" relational wisdom materials](#) in the [PACE \(Professional and Community Engagement\) Program](#) to provide free professional development training in secular venues throughout your community, which can greatly enhance your church's [community engagement, evangelism and church growth](#).
- You can equip individual church members in your church to use the [Transformed Pamphlet](#) to share the gospel with friends, relatives and coworkers in an easy and casual manner (see [Six Ways to Use the Transformed Pamphlet](#)).

## APPENDIX E - ADOPT RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS

American culture is increasingly hostile toward biblical values and spiritual accountability. Therefore, when a church seeks to carry out culturally rejected practices of pastoral care, such as church discipline, it opens itself to being sued for defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

Even if a church wins a lawsuit, it can cost thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of leadership time. Therefore, it is not good enough for a church to *prevail* on a lawsuit. You must act with such wisdom that you will *prevent* lawsuits from being filed in the first place.

The most important step in avoiding legal liability is to obey Jesus' timeless command to treat others the same way you would like to be treated yourself (Matt. 7:12). Beyond this, a church's best defense to a lawsuit is *"informed consent."* To secure this defense, a church must be able to prove that a person complaining of a wrong was fully informed of the church's pastoral policies and knowingly consented to live by them.

Your churches can clearly define their pastoral care policies and secure informed consent to them by adapting and adopting RW360's [Relational Commitments](#), which cover the following elements of church life and pastoral ministry:

- Resolving conflict through peacemaking and reconciliation
  - Key Provision: "Our leaders recognize that there are times when they may need assistance in dealing with unresolved disagreements within our leadership team (see Prov. 11:14; 15:22). Therefore, each year they will select three godly leaders who can be invited to offer them advice when they are unable to reach agreement on a leadership issue. A request for advice will be made when our leaders have had at least two discussions on a particular issue and two or more of them believe the issue is still unresolved and significant enough to require outside advice."



- Preserving marriages, limiting divorce and guiding remarriage
  - Exhorts either spouse to report neglect or abuse in their marriage
  - Defines biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage
- Protecting children from abuse
- Providing biblical counseling and protecting confidential communications
  - Preserves “[Clergy-Penitent-Privilege](#)” (so leaders can’t be compelled to testify about confidential information they received during counseling)
  - Protects leaders’ right to report dangerous behavior to civil authorities
- Promoting mutual accountability through redemptive church discipline
  - Describes church discipline as a redemptive process in which loving shepherds seek to gently restore vulnerable lost sheep (Isa. 40:11; Matt. 18:12-14)
  - Protects church from lawsuits alleging defamation, breach of fiduciary responsibility and intentional infliction of emotional distress

## **APPENDIX F - REDUCE SHEPHERDING LOAD BY BUILDING A PEACE SOWER TEAM**

In Exodus 18:13-27, we see an ancient example of a modern problem: a spiritual leader burning himself out as he tries to resolve all the conflicts in his community of faith. Fortunately, Moses’ father-in-law came for a visit and offered this wise counsel:

*“What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone... I will give you advice, and God be with you .... Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So, it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you” (Exod. 18:17-23).*

This advice is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. One of the wisest things churches can do is to identify gifted people in their ranks and train them to serve on an inhouse “Peace Sower Team” that provides their congregation with ongoing peacemaking training, conflict coaching and conciliation services.

These teams are like volunteer fire departments in small rural communities. Conflict resolution is not their full-time job, but when conflict breaks out, trained team members can promptly put on their “peacemaking hats” and work together to extinguish the “flames of conflict,” often saving many hours of work by the pastor.

To learn how your churches can build this kind of team in your church, download [Peace Sower Teams](#).

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